

# A Skeptic's Guide to Nutrition News

## WHY BE A SKEPTIC?

- Most nutrition studies do not properly disclose the presence, and impact, of industry funding.
- When industry funding is properly disclosed, study results are favorable to the sponsor more than 60% of the time.
- 40-60% of scientific studies cannot be reproduced.
- A research claim is more likely to be false than true, meaning conclusions were made that aren't backed up by the data.
- Many research findings simply represent the current prevailing bias.





### Nutrition Research

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Original Research

## Whole milk intake is associated with lower body weight and body mass index in American adults

Moises Torres-Gonzalez <sup>a</sup>  , Matthew A. Pikosky <sup>a</sup>, Kristin Ricklefs-Johnson <sup>a</sup>, Kristin Fulgoni <sup>b</sup>, Victor L. Fulgoni III <sup>b</sup>, Sanjiv Agarwal <sup>c</sup>, Christopher J. Cifelli <sup>a</sup>

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# *How to be a Savvy Consumer of Nutrition News*

- **What is the source?** Does the source have a known agenda, or financial interest, in what they are reporting? Is it clickbait?
- **Does the headline sound sensational?** Be skeptical if it: a) sounds too good to be true, b) is trying to scare you, or c) is overselling itself.
- **Was the research done on humans?** Studies done on mice or in a petri dish cannot be generalized to human health.
- **Go beyond the headline.** Read the entire article. Headlines often oversimplify complex findings or misrepresent the study's conclusions.
- **Is it correlation or causation?** Does the study show correlation (association between factors) or causation (one factor directly causing another)? Most nutrition research is correlational and should be interpreted with caution.
- **Consider relative risk vs. absolute risk.** Relative risk compares the risk between two groups (e.g., "50% higher risk"), while absolute risk shows the actual difference in risk (e.g., "increases from 2% to 3%"). Headlines often use relative risk because it sounds more dramatic.
- **Is the study titled "Effect of food product X on disease Y?"** If so, the research is likely to be industry-funded and have biased results.
- **Have you heard it before?** If the results seem contrary to what you know about a topic, be skeptical. Cross-check information with other sources to get a more balanced view.
- **Is it relevant to you and your health?** Consider how applicable the study findings are to your own health goals and circumstances. Personalized advice requires tailored approaches beyond generalized research findings.

## *Remember...*

- What we know about human nutrition isn't changing nearly as quickly as it seems.
- The never-ending flow of information creates the illusion there is something new to know.
- The basics of good nutrition have been known to us for a while, and are not likely to change.